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## FACTS ABOUT THE CAUCUS AND THE PRIMARY.

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WHEN Messrs. William Orton and Jackson S. Schultz reported, in 1871, their plan for the reorganization of the Republican party of the city of New York, the former admitted that it would not hold for more than ten years. "For," said he, "everything degenerates in New York, and nothing degenerates so fast as a political organization." Time has proved the truth of his words. The system which worked fairly well at first has, as a settled institution, become rotten to the core. By 1876 Mr. Schultz declared that he would no longer waste his time in attending the primaries, for the "workers" always "fixed things" before he got there, and if he tried to "fix things" they would promptly adjourn so as to beat him at the game. Three years later, Mr. George Bliss, than whom no better authority on the subject can be named, and who for years warmly supported the organization, suddenly awoke to the fact that the degeneracy predicted by Mr. Orton had set in and was making rapid progress. From year to year the abuses have grown worse. Controlling the vast federal patronage in the city, and having their representatives on the Board of Aldermen and in the State Legislature, these little evening clubs, to which admittance is denied unless the candidate will bind himself hand and foot by a disgraceful and humiliating pledge, and from which the slightest sign of independence will cause expulsion by a majority vote, have for thirteen years held absolute direction of the party policy, allowing the other fifty or sixty thousand Republicans, to whom they refused any share in the party management, the barren right of registering their decrees. To go through the empty form of depositing at the polls a ticket in the preparation of which they have not been allowed the most insignificant part, is all that is left of the "divine right of suffrage" to the great mass of Republicans

in the city of New York. In spite of an adverse majority of nearly two hundred thousand in the State, in spite of the well-nigh universal demand of the respectable newspapers and voters of the party, backed by the emphatic declaration of the last party platform, in spite of assured defeat to the party in elections to come, the old policy of exclusion, "discipline," and expulsion is still in force, the old iron-clad pledges are still exacted, the old "leaders" still retained; while the chairmanship of the Central Committee is refused to David Dows and Theo. W. Dwight, to be conferred upon Mr. John J. O'Brien, whose chief qualification seems to have been the fact that his obstinate candidacy for the office of Sheriff, in the face of protests from his own colleagues, divided the party vote and gave to the Democrats the municipal election of 1882.

But, it may be said, while no candid man denies that the primary system of the city of New York is full of the grossest abuses, yet, elsewhere in the State, the voice of the caucus may still be relied upon for a fair expression of party opinion. Let us go to the facts again.

In the fall of 1881 was held the primary election for the second ward of Newburgh, N. Y., under the management of the ward committee, whose chairman, in the face, it is claimed, of a majority of "noes," appointed as chairman and secretary of the caucus two of the candidates on the "ward committee ticket." These two were put into a little low-roofed, ten by fifteen shanty, the door was locked, an unopened ballot-box was handed in through a little window, and after refusing the opposition, or "People's Ticket," a representative, the chairman of the caucus announced that he was ready to receive the votes, which were passed in through the window, and the balloting began. The night was dark and the street filled by a crowd collected from all parts of the city. When the polls were closed, the supporters of the People's ticket again demanded an inspector at the counting, and were again refused. The chairman, with his back to the window, ten feet away, began with his colleague to count the votes, and announced that of the three hundred and seventy-five cast, his own ticket had received two hundred and six against one hundred and sixty-nine. A protest against the farce was filed, and on appeal to the convention the affidavits of two hundred and one persons were exhibited,—thirty-two more than declared by the chairman, and thirteen more than a majority,—

who swore to having voted the People's Ticket, a copy of which was attached to the declaration of each affiant. The chairman of the caucus, on the other hand, simply swore that the result as given was correct, but admitted on cross-examination that he did not count all the tickets, presuming his colleague's statement to be correct! He further admitted that he had destroyed the poll lists and tickets, "as usual," a few minutes after the result was announced. Yet, in the teeth of this evidence, the committee on contested seats, upon the selection of which the holders of the disputed places were, with gross unfairness, allowed to vote, decided against the contestants.

From other parts of the Empire State the same story comes in. "Our Republican ring," writes a gentleman from Buffalo, "tries to keep away respectable voters from the caucuses by appointing inconvenient times and places, giving short notice, and sometimes getting up rows, or so 'fixing' the organization beforehand . . . that respectable people will not go to them. By 'fixing' the new ward committees at the caucuses they can repeat this operation next year . . . so that even in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh wards, where respectability is actually in the majority, the respectable vote cannot now be got out for a caucus. When they cannot get a majority vote by these means, they bring in repeaters from other wards, and have resorted to frauds in counting the votes."

The full history of the "snap" primaries of 1880 in Albany County, that shameful attempt to throttle the majority, which our present system of primary elections makes only too easy for a determined and unscrupulous minority, should be known to every Republican who wishes to guard against a repetition of the abuse, and who still clings to a lingering hope that the wished-for reform may be brought about within the party before another "tidal wave" carries the independent vote, which he now sees can decide any election in the State of New York, over to his opponents for good and all.

Before the election for district delegates, preceding the national campaign of 1880, a petition, representing over fifteen hundred Republicans of Albany County, was presented to the general committee, requesting the appointment of certain gentlemen to secure a fair count at the polls. The response to this appeal was prompt and decisive. Refusing even to hear the communication read through, a minority of the committee, who,

however, took pains to attend and make a majority of the meeting, laid it on the table, and at once ordered a call for the holding of the primaries on the following day (Friday), to elect delegates for conventions to be held on the ensuing Saturday and Monday. The "slated" delegates, ten in number, were straightway elected in accordance with the preconcerted scheme, and subsequent disclosures showed that a deliberate conspiracy extended throughout the entire county. In Bethlehem, the notice was posted in the evening for an election to be held on the following day. As it takes time to get the farmers together, a week's notice had been customary. In New Scotland, the call was posted on Thursday for a meeting on Saturday to elect delegates to Monday's convention. Afterward, as it appeared, the two days' time seemed a dangerous concession, and so the machine leaders sent about one O'Brien to pull down the notices and post others for an election on Friday instead; and the same trick was played at Berne, Coeymans, and Guilderland. In Rensselaerville, the notice was published on Thursday for Friday's election. In Knox, five henchmen awaited the coming of the mail, on receipt of which, with instructions, they immediately posted notices, under which they at once resolved themselves into a caucus, electing three out of the five delegates to Albany! At Westerloo, no meeting was held nor any notices given; yet at the convention two delegates claiming to represent that place were promptly on hand. At Albany itself, in every ward, one or both of the inspectors of election appointed by the general committee, and over whom any other supervision was peremptorily refused, were office-holders directly controlled by the machine boss.

Such are a few examples of the operation of the present system of primary elections in the State of New York. If it were necessary to multiply instances, the writer could give similar facts, reported and vouched for, from other cities and towns. Those which are here detailed have been taken from the history of the Republican party, for the reason that within that organization the system has reached its highest development. But the words "Republican" and "Democrat" have no more significance for the "practical" politicians who trade and dicker in offices and votes than they had in the days of Mr. Tweed, who found that the easiest and cheapest way, by far, was to buy up the Republican caucus, "run" the Republican primaries, and then allow the

innocent voters to go through the form of a spirited contest at the polls.\*

But let us see how the system works under a different party name. In Democratic caucuses in the city of Baltimore, Md., it is stated, on the authority of a former United States Senator, the abuses have become intolerable. Frequently, with but a score of men to vote, thirty or forty ballots have been found in the hat. "The roughs of both parties," writes a Maryland legislator, "unite to carry for each other primaries in their class interests, to drive away the respectable element, and when not numerically strong enough, to stuff the ballot-box with 'pudding tickets,'—one ticket sometimes inclosing some twenty slips,—which the rascally election judges deliberately open and count for their nominee. . . . Each party in Baltimore is instructed by their city convention to receive votes from a certified court copy of the last revision of registration. Sometimes they obey; but, as we have over thirty thousand grave-yard and imaginary names on the registration lists, these are used by primary election manipulators for hired repeaters. This being the case, gentlemen will no longer attend primaries or support the class of men they force on each party."

In the primary elections of 1879, a city councilman and member of the "Three-Tenths Social Club," together with a city magistrate, brought wagon loads of hired repeaters from the Eighteenth Ward, "voted" them for the ring candidate in the Twentieth Ward, and then drove them over to the Eleventh Ward, where they again voted their roughs for another ring candidate. The reward to one of the principals for this sort of work, it is claimed, was a \$1600 clerkship in the City Appeal Court. In May, 1881, the power of the Democratic machine in Baltimore was so strong that it controlled the appointment of all the judges and clerks of the primaries in each of the twenty wards for the ensuing year. In the Twentieth Ward, the only one where a stand was made against the ring, the machine candidate was "given" two of the three judges—a saloon-keeper, and the boss of a gang of street-cleaners. The "leaders" collected some three hundred or four hundred repeaters in a saloon in an adjoining ward, where "refreshments" and a registration

\* Tweed disclosed his shrewd methods with much cynical frankness shortly before his death. See testimony taken before a committee of New York Aldermen in 1877.

book of the Twentieth Ward were provided, the men were "fixed" (*i.e.*, furnished with names to vote under), and sent in lots to the Twentieth Ward to vote for the ring's choice. These facts were brought out on sworn testimony at the convention on the following day. "Two years ago," writes a gentleman from whose letter these statements are taken, "I found eight hundred names to strike off our registration lists, and this autumn, one thousand six hundred and seventeen; and this is a clean ward. I could fill pages with instances like those already given."

In Philadelphia, under a similar system, like abuses sprang up and flourished. The rules of both parties were practically the same, and operated as they were meant to,—only to afford facilities to the "workers" to accomplish their purposes under a show of fair dealing. To control the inspectors meant to secure the primary election, without regard to the lawful ballots cast; to control the temporary chairman meant to secure the nomination, without regard to the number of delegates actually elected. The experience of a private gentleman, who supposed that he was performing a public duty by undertaking to join in the preliminaries of a political canvass, bears out this statement: "At a convention here to nominate a District Attorney in 1877, I sat as a delegate, or rather should have sat, for the purpose of nominating for that office the present Attorney-General of the United States, my friend Mr. Brewster. There were twenty election divisions in my ward, each of which elected a delegate to a ward convention, which was charged with the duty of electing three delegates to the county convention. The ward convention was held in strict conformity to the party rules, and three of us were elected delegates without opposition, receiving thirteen out of twenty votes, the other seven not voting at all. It turned out that these seven subsequently met and held what they called a convention, and proceeded to elect three other persons as delegates. When the convention met, we discovered that a printed list had been made up of the delegates to be recognized as *prima facie* entitled to sit in the convention, and our names were not on the list. Of course, we had no notice, were not even placed in the position of contestants, and were simply turned out. This was done in a sufficient number of wards to give one candidate, who controlled the temporary chairman, a large majority. It happened that I had greater facilities at my command than others, and I succeeded in having the necessary papers prepared

to make a contest in accordance with the rules, when the 'hat trick'\* was played upon me and I was again put out. This was the uniform practice here for years. The man who succeeded in getting the temporary chairman always got the nomination, without regard to the number of delegates actually elected for him." No one, though beaten by the most outrageous cheating, could make a successful stand against this iron-clad machine: for a solemn pledge in writing was exacted from every candidate before the balloting began to abide by the result of the vote in any event.

From other cities come similar facts. In Chicago, the local politicians long ago employed the methods familiar to the henchmen of Brooklyn and New York. In the spring of 1881, the notices of a primary in the Eighteenth Ward were sent out either the evening before or the very morning of the election, so as to follow the letter of the regulations, whilst giving to the "insiders" alone an opportunity of arranging to be on hand. The trick is a common one there. In Omaha, Neb., the Republican primaries, at which Democrats are frequently brought in, are under the management of a central committee, and the faction which musters the largest crowd at the opening of the polls controls the election of judges and clerks, and through them the result of the vote. At Indianapolis, Ind., the machine arranges everything in advance. At the Eighteenth Ward caucus of that city, in 1881, more tissue ballots were found in the box than there were voters in the whole ward. All were counted, and the tissue-ballot delegates declared elected. In the Twenty-fourth Ward, Democrats were brought in by both factions of a Republican caucus. Two delegations presented themselves at the convention, the chairman of one maintaining his side by the declaration: "Dey say ve had Temocrats, but it's a lie! Ve hadn't no more Temocrats dan dey did!"—a *tu quoque* argument which had its weight, for each side was allowed one-half its delegates—the customary method of composing such disputes in Indiana, according to the alleged statement of an old politician, who is said to have declared that he never knew a contest to be settled in any other way. In Cincinnati, Ohio, the primaries are controlled by the ward "leaders" much as they are in New

\* The rules provided that the committee to whom cases of contested seats were referred should be drawn by lot. As the temporary chairman appointed the tellers, he had little difficulty in "fixing" the result.



York. "The game," writes a gentleman whose name is well known in that city, "is to make the caucuses and primaries so disorderly and nasty that well-behaved people are glad to remain away"—a practice which, I am assured, is by no means uncommon at Milwaukee, Wis.

In certain parts of New England, the spirit of the caucus of Samuel Adams still, in a measure, survives. "In local elections," writes a former Assistant Attorney-General, speaking for Concord, Lynn, Salem, and Springfield, "the voter in caucus is expected to support the candidate, unless such candidate is a corrupt man"—an encouraging limitation, if allowed. Yet the exception is itself limited: "If he is only weak, a voter loses caste who bolts; and, as the Attorney-General says, he is considered a black sheep, and when he seeks for favors he gets the penalty of his independence. . . . In Springfield, the popular will generally finds free expression. . . . Both parties use the public ward-room. The Mayor is nominated at city caucus, at which many respectable voters attend, and where charges of fraud are seldom, if ever, raised." But in the political circles of Boston no such laxity of discipline is tolerated. There the evolution of the system follows the usual lines of development. The ward elections are preceded by "back-parlor caucuses," where the "slate" is made up which generally wins; and the discipline of both machines is as strict as any New York leader could wish. Mr. Patrick Maguire, Chairman of the Democratic City Committee, assures me that a refusal to support the regular candidate causes the offender "to be cut off from the party and not allowed to afterward participate in caucuses," and to be expelled from his political association or club. The Republican City Committee is composed of five members from each ward, who constitute the ward committees. They elect their own members, subject to confirmation by the Executive Committee, which controls the time of holding the caucus and the preparation of the ballots, decides contested elections, and holds exclusive ownership of the rolls. Their power, as defined by the constitution and rules, is more centralized and arbitrary than that of any other political organization of which the writer has knowledge. Their chairman also declares that a refusal to support the "regulars" is punished by striking the bolter's name from the rolls, refusing his vote, and expelling him; while a member of the City Committee who even belongs to any other political committee or

convention is liable to expulsion. Such is the development of the New England caucus in the State where the Republican party, in convention assembled, unanimously adopted the following statement of the doctrine of party allegiance: "The duty of all Republicans loyally to support the candidates of the party, and the duty of the nominating conventions to present candidates who are acceptable to all Republicans, are reciprocal duties of equal force and obligation." This, too, was the party which refused to expel, at the urgent solicitation of the present Governor,—it was at one of the times when he happened to be a Republican,—a delegate who declined to pledge himself as the General demanded. And yet it was in this party and in this State that Judge Adin Thayer gained the twenty-five years' political experience which leads him to the conclusion that "no better system could probably be devised."\*

People do not everywhere agree with Judge Thayer, for in certain States substitutes for the primary system have been adopted with, it must be admitted, but scanty success. Of these the best known is the "Crawford County Plan," by which the electors cast their votes directly for the candidates of their choice, instead of voting for delegates to select the nominees in convention. The system, as might be expected, works fairly well in small cities and towns where candidates and voters are known to each other, and where the opportunities for fraud may thus be kept in check. In Springfield, Worcester, and some other cities of New England, for example, the custom of voting directly in town meeting for the nominees to local offices works very well, because the inspectors have little difficulty in "spotting" repeaters, and the balloting takes place in fit places at convenient hours. So, too, in Richmond, Va., the Democrats, for over ten years past, have tried the plan of keeping the polls open all day and allowing the voter a direct vote on the nominees with undoubtedly good results. The party action, it is

\**Note.*—Judge Thayer takes pains to qualify his declaration in this way: "If I attend, and, contrary to my advice, corrupt men are nominated for office, then I can refuse to ratify its doings with clean hands; but not otherwise." Can he? Where in the rules of either party can he find this limitation admitted, expressly or by inference? And does Judge Thayer suppose that the "workers" will, for one instant, allow him or any other private citizen to decide for himself whether a candidate is or is not "corrupt" so long as he is "regular"?

claimed, has been harmonious, effective, and pure, with an actual gain of popular interest.

The fact that respectability is thus allowed a voice here and there leads observers like Judge Thayer to conclude that the same system may be applied with equal success everywhere, provided only the respectable element will "come out" and do its duty. But the system in its present forms has never yet, in the long run, worked with any but disastrous results in even the respectable districts of thickly populated cities, where it has proved totally inadequate to protect the honest voter and to give his voice and vote the effectiveness which an honest system should secure. For example, a California correspondent of the New York "Nation" writes, in 1881: "The primary works here about as it does everywhere else, with reasonably fair results in the country, and in the cities in a way which is well-nigh the despair of good citizens."\* In 1880, the Republican primaries were alleged to have been "fixed" for the election of United States Senator. "The vast and complicated intrigue," says Mr. Nye, "wire-pulling and log-rolling necessary to accomplish this result had been carried on under the very noses of the voters without exposing what was in progress." One cause of all this is patent. The California statute, like that of Ohio, makes it entirely optional with any political body whether or not it will conduct its proceedings under the general election law. The result is simply to hasten the abuses a single step. As the primaries in New York and Brooklyn "fix" in advance every measure which the ordinary voter is allowed to ratify at the polls, so the "back-parlor caucuses" and "conferences" of California, Ohio, and Pennsylvania arrange every nomination which the independent voter at the primary may record or not, as he chooses, with imperceptible influence either way upon the final result.

We may go further afield if necessary for examples of the degeneracy of the caucus. The "Birmingham Model," which was imported to England from the United States some sixteen years ago, is our caucus system adapted to English environment. The party "whips" naturally approve of the plan, finding it so conducive to the strictest party discipline. Mr. Chamberlain, for example, sings its praises in notes which strongly remind us of Senator Conkling, or Mr. Bliss.† But the sturdy Briton has

\* A. B. Nye, of San Francisco, in New York "Nation," No. 865.

† "The Caucus," *Fortnightly Review*, 1878, p. 721.

already begun to fret under the paralyzing grip of the machine, with its attendant evils, "pledges," "discipline," and "assessments."\*

Whenever we examine, we find the same results attending the development of the caucus system in all large cities and towns. That the mass of voters have no choice in the selection of the candidates who depend upon their ballots for election must be conceded. While it is true that the majority of intelligent men do not take such interest in these matters as the public good demands, do not "come out" to the primaries and attend the caucuses; while it may be true, as Judge Thayer asserts, that "hundreds of thousands of intelligent men to-day pride themselves upon their indifference to politics,"—are they to blame? Does any really "practical" politician believe that the respectable voter can "make his influence felt," as Judge Thayer demands, or that the primary of to-day is open to him, except as the term is defined by a gentleman who, writing of Syracuse, New York, says: "It is open to any one who will do the dirty work necessary to become a leader"? And how can it be otherwise? It is not a day, a month, or an evening, or two evenings a week that a man must give to do effective political work under the present system of our nominating machinery. He must give his whole time morning, noon, and night. Does Judge Thayer understand all that is required of a district leader in the city of New York? Or does he flatter himself that he could "make his influence felt" against "Barney" or "Jake" or "Mike" better than Mr. Schultz or Mr. David Dows or Prof. Dwight has done? Can Mr. Freshman who sparred so neatly at the Harvard gymnasium on the last Ladies' Day stand up for ten minutes in a twenty-four foot ring against Mr. John L. Sullivan of Boston?

With two-thirds of the Republican bosses in New York holding federal office, it is easy to see how politics can be made to pay; and we may reform, and reorganize and reënroll annually, quarterly, or monthly if we will, yet so long as we allow our non-elective offices, federal, State, or municipal, to be used as a reward for certain sorts of work, certain sorts of men will always be on hand to do it; and it is not the kind of work that Judge Thayer

\* "The Caucus and its Consequences," *Nineteenth Century*, Oct., 1878; "Political Clubs and Party Organizations," *Ibid.* May, 1878. An unsuccessful attempt was made to "discipline" no less a person than Mr. Forster for his course on the Government Education Bill in 1878.

or Mr. Schultz or Prof. Dwight would care to do. Yet, under the present system, it is the only sort of work that tells. Let any one who feels as Judge Thayer does, that "his duty to himself, his country and mankind can only be performed by attending and making his presence felt at the primary meeting," attempt to carry out his convictions in Brooklyn or New York. Listen to the experience of an innocent gentleman who made the trial in the former city: "Together with two regular Republicans I repaired to the primary, to which I supposed all Republicans were invited; and although we were forty-year-old native citizens, accredited intelligent in ordinary things, yet to our surprise, not being members of the association, we had no voice whatever in a primary. We had gone on a fool's errand. I then learned that a few leaders had cut and dried matters, and that a host of men like ourselves, without the necessary wire-pulling knowledge and influence, would prove powerless even though we were members. Men voted for delegates and substitutes with a most absurd ignorance of what they might do. Until caucuses and primaries are conducted differently from this, I for one do not care to waste my time over them, however much I may deplore the dormant attitude it places me in as a citizen."

The nation has taken one wide step in aid of the needed reform. A large part of the federal offices will cease to be disposed of as "patronage." As Mr. Dorman B. Eaton has said, "the reform of the primaries is largely dependent upon the reform of the civil service." The same principle must be applied to State and municipal offices as well, so that another Tweed may not have it in his power to control the caucus of his opponents by his disposal of the places which he holds in his grasp. When the independent vote, which can at any time decide a national election or a State election, certainly in Massachusetts, Ohio, Pennsylvania, or New York, has secured this reform, has enforced the passage of statutes extending the operation of the general election laws to the primaries; when we punish fraud at the primary like fraud at the polls, and insist that all parties shall hold their primaries on the same day, at convenient polling places, open from sunrise to sunset; when we have extended the penalties against bribery, fraud, and perjury so as to cover all preliminary meetings, primaries, or conventions for the selection of candidates, so as to prevent the "heelers" "getting in their work in advance,"—then it will be time for Judge Thayer and men

who believe as he does to throw the blame for the decay of the caucus on honest people who neglect their public duties. But until we have thrown about the primary at least the same safeguards by which we protect the general election; until the honest citizen can feel assured that his vote will be counted as cast, and that by time and attendance he can really do effective service for his country, without stooping to the dirty work which is admittedly essential to success at the primary to-day,—no man can justly be charged with neglect of his duty who declines to be a party to the farce. On the contrary, as matters now stand, he who, with a full knowledge of what is before him, continues to run about to ward meetings and district associations, deserves to be called either a fool for his pains or a knave for his purposes. When we have done all that we can do and all that we ought to do to give any sort of weight to the vote, voice, and work of the intelligent and honest citizen, and have ceased to say, in effect, that if he wants to be successful at the primary he must leave his honesty at home, it will be time for us to demand his attendance and to insist that his indifference means a speedy verification of Macaulay's prophetic warning.

GEORGE WALTON GREEN.